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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 ROME 002999

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR SCIENCE ADVISOR NEUREITER  
EUR/ERA FOR HEN-NIL  
EB FOR GADSEN  
EB/TPF/ATT FOR PEREZ

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E FOR SHUB

OES A/S TURNER, PDAS ROCK  
STATE PASS USTR FOR STROJE, NOVELLI  
STATE PASS USDA FOR APHIS:SMCCAMMON  
USDA/FAS:BLUM  
USDA/FAS/ITT:EJONES  
USDA/FAS/OA:SLUTSKY  
USDA/OS/HEGWOOD  
STATE PASS FDA FOR EFLAMM  
EPA FOR OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATOR  
NSC FOR EDSON, CLOUD

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: GOOD AND BAD SCIENCE TAKE CENTER STAGE IN BIOTECH  
DEBATE

REF: A. A. ROME 1965

[B](#). B. ROME 2765

[1](#)1. (U) THIS CABLE IS SENSTIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. IT IS NOT  
INTENDED FOR DISTRIBUTION ON THE INTERTET.

[1](#)2. (U) THIS IS AN ACTION MESSAGE FOR OES WHICH REQUESTS  
REPLY TO REF A TRANSMITTED APRIL 22, 2002. ALSO SEE PARA 19.

[1](#)3. (SBU) SUMMARY. THE ROLE OF SCIENCE IN THE ITALIAN  
BIOTECHNOLOGY DEBATE IS GROWING, THANKS IN PART TO EMBASSY  
EFFORTS. IN THE LAST TEN DAYS, TWO DEBATES FEATURING LEADING  
U.S. AND ITALIAN SCIENTISTS HAVE BEEN WELL COVERED BY THE  
MEDIA AND HAVE THROWN INTO QUESTION THE UNSCIENTIFIC  
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FOUNDATIONS USED BY AGMIN ALEMANNO TO POSIT HIS "TIME FOR  
CHOICES" WHITE PAPER. ALEMANNO'S TEAM IS REGARDED WITH  
SKEPTICISM AND EVEN CONTEMPT BY THE ITALIAN SCIENTIFIC  
COMMUNITY. AT THE MINISTER'S JUNE 4 STAGE-MANAGED PUBLIC  
ROLL-OUT OF HIS WHITE PAPER, OUTDATED AND SUPERSEDED RESEARCH  
WAS PRESENTED AS GOSPEL, SECONDED BY A THEOLOGIAN, AND  
COMMENTED ON FROM THE FLOOR BY A PRESELECTED GROUP OF  
PRO-ALEMANNO, ANTI-GMO PROPONENTS.

[1](#)4. (SBU) SUMMARY CONTINUED. OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE GOI  
APPEAR MORE AND MORE WILLING TO ENDORSE SCIENCE AND RESEARCH  
AS A WAY TO OPPOSE THE ALEMANNO LUDDITES AND THEIR ANTI-GMO  
PROPOSALS. THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, IN ON-THE-RECORD  
ADDRESSES AT THE DG AND U/S LEVELS, ENDORSED THE NEED FOR  
SCIENCE-BASED POLICY, STRONG U.S.-ITALIAN RESEARCH  
COOPERATION, AND USING THAT COOPERATION TO REOPEN A BROADER  
U.S.-EU DIALOGUE DURING THE 2003 ITALIAN PRESIDENCY. THE PM'S  
NATIONAL BIOTECHNOLOGY COMMISSION PRESIDENT HAS SPOKEN  
SIMILARLY, AND TOLD US WE SHOULD EXPECT ENDORSEMENT OF THE  
PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION DOCUMENT DESCRIBED REF A FROM THE  
PM'S OFFICE BY THE END OF JUNE. LAST, BUT BY NO MEANS LEAST,  
THE PRIME MINISTER, CONTINUING TO FIND HIS WAY WITH CAUTION,  
HAS SAID THAT ITALY MUST REMAIN OPEN TO RESEARCH, AND LOOK TO  
THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHER COUNTRIES. THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY WE  
SHOULD NOT FAIL TO EXPLOIT. SEE EMBASSY ANALYSIS STARTING  
PARA 16.END SUMMARY.

RAISING THE BAR ON FEAR-MONGERING?

[1](#)5. (U) THE ITALIAN SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY HAS REMAINED  
STEADFASTLY PRO-BIOTECHNOLOGY, BUT HAS BEEN RELUCTANT TO  
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EXPRESS ITS VIEWS DUE TO FEARS OF REPRISALS FROM  
GOVERNMENT(E.G. DISCRIMINATORY CUTBACKS IN ALREADY SCARCE  
RESEARCH FUNDING) AND ACTIONS BY ANTI-GMO GROUPS WHO HAVE  
DISRUPTED OR DESTROYED EXPERIMENTS INVOLVING GMO PLANTS AT A  
RESEARCH PLOT NEAR VITERBO AS RECENTLY AS TWO WEEKS AGO. IN  
THE FIRST DAYS OF THE BERLUSCONI GOVERNMENT, THERE WAS HOPE  
THAT A PRO-SCIENCE, PRO-BUSINESS GOVERNMENT WOULD ACT QUICKLY  
TO OPEN THE WAY FOR RESUMED BIOTECHNOLOGY RESEARCH. IN THE  
LAST SIX MONTHS, AS THE CONTOURS OF ALEMANNO'S ANTI-BIOTECH  
POLICIES HAVE BECOME CLEARER, THAT HOPE HAS FADED.  
SCIENTISTS NOW BELIEVE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER ALONE CAN  
OPPOSE ALEMANNO'S PROPOSED POLICY, AND THEY ARE TRYING TO  
HELP EXPOSE THE SHABBY SCIENTIFIC UNDERPINNINGS OF THE  
AGRICULTURE MINISTER'S WHITE PAPER BY CONDUCTING THEIR OWN  
PROGRAMS WHICH SHOW THE BENEFITS OF THE TECHNOLOGY.

[1](#)6. (SBU) THE SCIENTISTS ARE ASSISTED IN THEIR EFFORTS TO  
CREATE A PUBLIC FOR THEIR DISCUSSIONS BY A HANDFUL OF  
ORGANIZATIONS. PROMINENT AMONG THEM HAS BEEN THE EINAUDI  
FOUNDATION, WHOSE "OBSERVATORY FOR BIOETHICS" HAS SPONSORED A  
NUMBER OF PRO-BIOTECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS IN THE LAST YEAR. MOST  
RECENTLY, ON MAY 31 AND JUNE 1, THE EINAUDI FOUNDATION  
ORGANIZED A TWO DAY PROGRAM ON PLANT VACCINES AND ENHANCING  
NUTRITION IN FOODS USING BIOTECHNOLOGY. ABOUT 250 PEOPLE,

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ACTION EUR-00

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EB-00 EXME-00 E-00 FFAE-00 UTED-00 VC-00 FRB-00  
HHS-01 H-01 TEDE-00 INR-00 ITC-01 L-00 NASA-01  
AC-01 NSAE-00 OES-01 OMB-01 OPIC-01 PM-00 ACE-00  
SP-00 SSO-00 SS-00 STR-00 TEST-00 TRSE-00 USIE-00  
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MOSTLY PRO-BIOTECH, ATTENDED THIS PROGRAM AT THE CENTER FOR NATIONAL RESEARCH. DR. CHARLES ARNTZEN OF ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY, SUPPORTED IN PART BY THE EMBASSY, WAS THE MAIN U.S. SPEAKER. DR. INGO POTRYKUS, INVENTOR OF GOLDEN RICE, LED THE NUTRITIONAL ENHANCEMENT DISCUSSIONS. THE MAIN TALKS WERE BROADCAST ON RADIO RADIKALE, AND LOCAL MEDIA AND PRESS INTERVIEWED DR. ARNTZEN.

17. (U) THE WORKSHOP WAS OPENED BY THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT(DG CLINI, WHO HAD TOLD US THE PREVIOUS DAY THAT THE MINISTER HAD AGREED TO EXPLORE A MORE OPEN APPROACH TO BIOTECHNOLOGY). THE BRIEF STATEMENT POINTED OUT THAT EUROPE WAS NOT, AND COULD NOT BE, GM FREE, THAT RESEARCH, INCLUDING  
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STRONG PARTNERSHIP WITH THE U.S, WAS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING THE POTENTIAL OF BIOTECHNOLOGY, AND THAT ITALY HAD TO TAKE POLICY DECISIONS IN A EUROPEAN AND LARGER CONTEXT. EST COUNS SPOKE ON THE NEED FOR POSITIVE STEWARDSHIP IN POLICY FORMULATION WITH PARTICULAR NEED TO SEPARATE EMOTIONAL SPECULATION AND OPINION POLLS FROM THE VERIFIABLE AND SYSTEMATIC INQUIRIES OF SCIENCE. LEONARDI SANTI, PRESIDENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S COMMITTEE ON BIOTECHNOLOGY, SAID THAT ITALY WOULD SOON CONCLUDE AN AGREEMENT ON RESEARCH WITH THE U.K. AND THAT THE PM'S OFFICE STRONGLY SUPPORTED A RESEARCH AGREEMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES.

18. (U) ARNTZEN AND POTRYKUS WERE THE MOST EFFECTIVE SPEAKERS. ARNTZEN OUTLINED RESEARCH WHICH PROMISED AN EDIBLE PLANT-BASED VACCINE FOR HEPATITIS B WITHIN 5 YEARS. POTRYKUS DELIVERED A CHILLING CRITICISM OF THE EU REGULATORY SYSTEM THAT WAS HAMPERING THE DISSEMINATION OF GOLDEN RICE AND OTHER NUTRITIONAL ENHANCEMENTS, SUCH AS IRON, WHICH HE CLAIMED COULD SAVE UP TO 40,000 LIVES A DAY IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD.

19. (U) ON JUNE 6, ASSOBIOTECH, THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATION, PRESENTED A HALF-DAY PROGRAM TO PRESENT A STUDY OF ITALIAN "TYPICAL" PRODUCTS AT RISK FROM PESTS AND DISEASES WHICH COULD BE IMPROVED BY BIOTECHNOLOGIES. PROFESSOR FRANCESCO SALA OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MILAN INTRODUCED THE STUDY, AND HIS PRESENTATION WAS SUPPORTED BY OTHER SCIENTISTS, WHOSE REMARKS WERE INTERRUPTED BY THE SHOUTS OF ABOUT A DOZEN LEGAMBIENTE (ITALY'S MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL NGO) PROTESTORS FROM THE STREET BELOW.

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110. (SBU) IMPORTANT REMARKS WERE MADE BY MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT U/S TORTOLI, WHO PLACED BIOTECHNOLOGIES IN AGRICULTURE IN A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT, SPOKE IN FAVOR OF U.S.-ITALY RESEARCH COOPERATION, A EUROPEAN NETWORK (AN IDEA PRESENTED A FEW DAYS EARLIER TO EST COUNS BY FORZA ITALIA SCIENCE ADVISOR ARATA), AND THE KEY ROLE ITALY COULD PLAY IN ITS 2003 EU PRESIDENCY. COMMENT: TORTOLI'S SPEECH WAS DRAFTED BY DG CLINI FOR THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT. ASSOBIOTECH HAD SEEN AN EARLIER DRAFT OF THE SPEECH, AND ADVISED TORTOLI TO BE CAREFUL. HE WAS NOT, WHICH WE ASSUME REFLECTS A DECISION BY MIN OF ENVIRONMENT MATTEOLI TO MOVE MORE OPENLY IN OPPOSITION TO ALEMANNI'S MORE NATIONALISTIC POSITION. END COMMENT.

111. (U) THE MOST SURPRISING REMARKS OF THE DAY WERE MADE BY THE CHAIR OF THE SENATE AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE, MAURIZIO RONCONI. OPENLY CRITICAL OF ALEMANNI'S POSITIONS, RONCONI CALLED FOR A POLICY OF REALISM, FOUNDED ON SCIENCE. HE ARGUED THAT GM FREE AGRICULTURE DID NOT EXIST IN ITALY NOW, THAT GMO FREE SEEDS WERE NOT AVAILABLE IN SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES, AND THAT A ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY WOULD NOT BENEFIT, BUT WOULD DAMAGE SMALL FARMERS WHO WOULD HAVE TO PAY A PREMIUM PRICE FOR SEEDS UNDER THE ALEMANNI POLICY. HE NOTED THAT NO "GM-FREE" CERTIFICATION SCHEMES WERE IN PLACE, AND THAT DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A RELIABLE SCHEME WOULD BE

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THEIR POSITINS BASED ON SCIENCE. IT'S JUST NOT THE SAME

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INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AGRE-00	AID-00	CEA-01	CIAE-00	COME-00
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	EB-00	EXME-00	E-00	FAAE-00	UTED-00	VC-00	FRB-00
	HHS-01	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	L-00	NASA-01
	AC-01	NSAE-00	OES-01	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PM-00	ACE-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00
	EPAE-00	PMB-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/011W

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INFO EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
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SCIENCE. BIOTECH OPPONENTS USED OUTDATED, OFTEN DISCREDITED OR NON-PEER REVIEWED "RESEARCH" TO JUSTIFY THEIR POSITION. BIOTECH PROPONENTS, WHO KNOW THE SCIENCE, CAN EXPOSE THE SPECIOUS LOGIC UNDERLYING ALEMANNIO'S POSITION BY REFERRING TO INTERNATIONALLY PEER-REVIEWED FINDINGS, AND STUDIES BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND OTHER BODIES. BY INTERNATIONALIZING THE DEBATE, BIOTECH SUPPORTERS REDUCE THE RISK OF PERSONAL RETRIBUTION, AND FORCE ALEMANNIO'S NATIONALISTIC VIEW (WE WILL PROTECT OUR NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE BY CLOSING OUR POLITICAL BORDERS TO ALL BIOTECHNOLOGY) TO BE LOOKED AT IN INTERNATIONAL BIOLOGICAL, ECOLOGICAL, AND TRADE TERMS. THE POTENTIAL OF BIOTECHNOLOGY TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY NEEDS OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD, DISMISSED BY ALEMANNIO AS MINIMAL, CAN BE DEMONSTRATED BY

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ARNTZEN AND POTRYKUS, BY SCIENTIFIC LEADERS LIKE NORMAN BORLAUG AND PER PINSTRUP ANDERSEN WHO HAVE FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD, AND BY DEVELOPING WORLD SCIENTISTS LIKE ROMANO KIOME FROM KENYA.

117. (SBU) ALEMANNIO SIMPLY HAS NO SCIENTISTS OF DISTINCTION WHO SUPPORT HIS POINT OF VIEW. THE MORE WE TAKE HIM AT HIS WORD IN HIS ENDORSEMENT OF RESEARCH AND SPECIFICALLY OF RESEARCH WITH THE U.S.--HIS DG AMBROSIO TOLD EST COUNS AND AGMINCOUNS OVER LUNCH JUNE 7 THAT THE MINISTER WAS FULLY COMMITTED TO COLLABORATION, AND THAT ALL 24 OF THE ADMINISTRY'S INSTITUTES WERE AVAILABLE AND FAVORABLY DISPOSED-- THE MORE WE RAISE THE BAR ON THE SCIENTIFIC STANDARD ITALY WILL USE TO EVALUATE ITS POLICY OPTIONS ON BIOTECHNOLOGY. FURTHER, A STRONG PROGRAM OF VISITING U.S. SCIENTISTS, WHO ARE HELD IN HIGH REGARD, CREATES OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC MEETINGS WHICH INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION IN CIRCULATION IN THE MEDIA AND AMONG CONSUMER AND ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AS WELL AS THE GENERAL PUBLIC. IN THE MEDIUM TERM WE COULD CREATE SOME HEALTHY SKEPTICISM ABOUT ALEMANNIO'S NOSTALGIC VIEW OF ITALIAN AGRICULTURE AND THE THREATENING MANNER WHICH HE PRESENTS BIOTECHNOLOGY.

118. (SBU) THIS DOESN'T MEAN SCIENCE WILL EASILY WIN THE DAY. AS HE LOSES GROUND IN THE SCIENCE DEBATE--AND WE WILL REPORT SEPTTEL ON THE BILATERAL DIMENSIONS OF THE BIOTECH DEBATE SPARKED BY THE FAO SUMMIT-- WE FULLY EXPECT A RENEWED RESORT TO EMOTIONALISM AND ANTI-GMO DEMONSTRATIONS BY GREEN ORGANIZATIONS. THESE WILL ATTRACT MEDIA ATTENTION, AND REINFORCE THE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE SAFETY OF BIOTECHNOLOGY

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IN THE MIND OF THE ITALIAN PUBLIC. WE NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT RECENT ANTI-GMO DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE BEEN POORLY ATTENDED -- EVEN THE JUNE 6-7 ANTIGLOBAL DEMONSTRATORS NUMBERED ONLY 10-12,000 INSTEAD OF THE 40,000 PREDICTED. MEDIA-COVERED SCIENCE DEBATES LIKE THOSE REPORTED HERE ARE ONE COUNTERMEASURE WE CAN EMPLOY TO FURTHER USG POLICY ENDS.

119. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: OES IS ASKED TO RESPOND TO ROME 1965 TRANSMITTED APRIL 22, 2002. THIS MESSAGE REQUESTS DEPARTMENT'S CONCURRENCE IN DISCUSSING COOPERATION ON BIOTECHNOLOGY RESEARCH, THROUGH A FORMAL BILATERAL MEETING AT THE EXPERT LEVEL, UNDER THE UMBRELLA S&T AGREEMENT. THIS WILL ALLOW US TO TAKE FIRST MEASURES, AMONG THEM A AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE TO OES/SCP'S SUGGESTION THAT EST COUNS AND A GOI REP EXAMINE THE US-EU BIOTECH TASKFORCE AS AN

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